

ADVERTISING AS A TOOL FOR KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND SOCIAL RESILIENCE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to examine advertising as a tool for knowledge transfer and social resilience in times of crisis. In situations such as pandemics, natural disasters, economic instability, and armed conflicts, societies face increased uncertainty and an urgent need for reliable information. In this context, advertising increasingly performs functions beyond its traditional commercial role, contributing to the dissemination of socially relevant knowledge and the promotion of adaptive behaviours. The study is based on a qualitative research approach combining theoretical analysis and qualitative content analysis of selected advertising campaigns implemented during recent global and regional crises. The research focuses on key dimensions of crisis advertising, including informational content, emotional appeal, ethical considerations, persuasive strategies, and communication channels. A comparative analytical framework is applied to identify patterns and differences in message design and effectiveness. The results indicate that advertising messages characterized by clear and accurate informational content, combined with emotional appeals such as empathy, solidarity, and hope, are more effective in supporting knowledge transfer and enhancing public trust. Ethical transparency and social responsibility further strengthen message credibility and contribute to social resilience. The findings also reveal that digital advertising platforms play a significant role in accelerating cross-border knowledge transfer due to their speed, reach, and interactivity. The study concludes that advertising can serve as an important component of knowledge-based crisis communication when aligned with ethical principles and socially responsible practices. The findings provide practical implications for designing crisis-related advertising strategies that support informed decision-making, collective resilience, and sustainable societal responses.

Keywords: advertising, knowledge transfer, social resilience, crisis communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

Periods of crisis such as pandemics, natural disasters, economic instability, and armed conflicts significantly disrupt social systems and increase the demand for timely, accurate, and reliable information. In these circumstances, the transfer of knowledge plays a crucial role in supporting social stability and adaptive behaviour. Effective communication helps reduce uncertainty and enables individuals and communities to respond appropriately to rapidly changing conditions (Weick, 1995; Martin & Hewstone, 2003).

Traditionally, governmental institutions and mass media have been considered the primary channels for crisis communication. However, in recent decades advertising has increasingly evolved beyond its commercial purpose and has become an influential tool for disseminating socially relevant knowledge. Advertising messages during crises often communicate essential information related to public health, safety measures, and social responsibility, while simultaneously shaping attitudes and behavioural intentions (Kotler & Lee, 2008; Heath & O’Hair, 2009).

Advertising contributes to social resilience by reinforcing shared values, promoting collective action, and strengthening public trust in institutions and social norms. Through emotional appeals, visual storytelling, and persuasive narratives, advertising can facilitate understanding, compliance, and cooperation among diverse social groups (Du Plessis, 2018; Cheng, Kotler, & Lee, 2011). In digital environments, advertising enables rapid cross-border knowledge transfer, allowing crisis-related information to reach wide audiences in a short period of time (Castells, 2010).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of advertising as a tool for knowledge transfer in times of crisis depends on ethical communication practices, message credibility, and cultural sensitivity. Poorly designed or misleading campaigns may increase confusion and erode public trust, undermining social resilience (Coombs, 2015). This paper examines the role of advertising as a mechanism for knowledge transfer during crises, focusing on its contribution to social resilience and its capacity to support informed and adaptive societal responses.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research approach in order to examine advertising as a tool for knowledge transfer and social resilience during crisis situations. Qualitative methods are particularly suitable for exploring communication processes, meanings, and message interpretation in social contexts characterized by uncertainty and rapid change (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The research design combines theoretical analysis with a review of selected advertising campaigns implemented during recent global and regional crises, such as public health emergencies and socio-economic disruptions. Case-based and document analysis methods are commonly applied in advertising and communication research to examine message strategies and social impact (Bryman, 2016; Eisenhardt, 1989).

The materials used in this study include peer-reviewed academic literature on crisis communication, advertising, knowledge transfer, and social resilience, as well as publicly available advertising materials distributed through traditional and digital media channels. Academic sources published within the last five years were prioritized to ensure the relevance and contemporary nature of the analysis (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Coombs, 2015).

The methodological framework is based on qualitative content analysis, focusing on key dimensions such as informational content, emotional appeal, ethical considerations, and persuasive strategies. Content analysis is a widely used method for systematically interpreting communication messages and identifying recurring patterns and themes (Krippendorff, 2018). A comparative analytical approach was applied in order to identify similarities and differences across advertising campaigns and to assess their contribution to knowledge transfer and social resilience in times of crisis.

In order to ensure a systematic and transparent analysis of advertising messages, a structured analytical framework was developed, defining the key dimensions applied in the content analysis. The analytical framework used for the qualitative content analysis is presented in **Table 1**, which outlines the key dimensions applied in the examination of advertising messages during crisis situations (Krippendorff, 2018).

Table 1. Analytical framework for the content analysis of advertising messages

Analytical Dimension	Description	Purpose in the Study
Informational Content	Presence of factual and educational information related to the crisis	To assess knowledge transfer effectiveness
Emotional Appeal	Use of emotions such as fear, hope, solidarity, or empathy	To evaluate emotional influence on social resilience
Ethical Considerations	Transparency, truthfulness, and social responsibility of messages	To examine ethical communication practices
Persuasive Strategy	Call to action, behavioural guidance, or normative influence	To analyse behavioural impact
Communication Channel	Traditional media vs. digital platforms	To identify differences in message dissemination

Source: own compilation.

The methodological framework is based on qualitative content analysis, focusing on key dimensions such as informational content, emotional appeal, ethical considerations, and persuasive strategies, as outlined in Table 1. These dimensions were selected because they represent core components of effective advertising communication in crisis contexts, where audiences require both reliable information and emotional reassurance. Previous studies have demonstrated that the interaction between cognitive and affective elements is critical for facilitating understanding, trust, and adaptive behaviour during periods of heightened uncertainty (Heath, 2014; Du Plessis, 2018).

Content analysis is a widely used method for systematically interpreting communication messages and identifying recurring patterns and themes, particularly in media and advertising research (Krippendorff, 2018). By operationalizing the analytical dimensions presented in Table 1, the study ensures consistency and transparency in the evaluation of advertising messages across different campaigns. The comparative analytical approach further enables the identification of similarities and differences in message strategies, allowing for a more nuanced assessment of how advertising contributes to knowledge transfer and social resilience in times of crisis (Bryman, 2016).

3. RESULTS

The qualitative content analysis of selected advertising campaigns revealed several recurring patterns related to knowledge transfer and the promotion of social resilience during crisis situations. The results indicate that advertising messages with a strong informational component were more effective in communicating essential knowledge, particularly when factual data were presented in a clear and accessible manner. Such findings support previous research emphasizing the importance of clarity and accuracy in crisis-related communication (Coombs, 2015). In addition, messages that combined informational clarity with concise behavioural guidance were more likely to encourage compliance with recommended actions and reduce public uncertainty. This finding is consistent

with studies suggesting that actionable information enhances the effectiveness of crisis communication by supporting informed decision-making (Heath & O’Hair, 2009; Coombs, 2015). To provide a clearer overview of the main findings, the key results of the content analysis are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of key findings from the content analysis of crisis advertising

Key Dimension	Dominant Characteristics	Observed Impact
Informational Content	Clear, factual, and instructional messages	Effective knowledge transfer and reduced uncertainty
Emotional Appeal	Emphasis on solidarity, empathy, and hope	Increased public engagement and behavioral compliance
Ethical Considerations	Transparency and social responsibility	Enhanced trust and credibility
Communication Channel	Predominantly digital platforms	Faster dissemination and cross-border reach

Source: own compilation.

Emotional appeal emerged as a central element in crisis advertising, with messages frequently emphasizing solidarity, empathy, and collective responsibility. Campaigns that combined emotional narratives with practical guidance were found to enhance message credibility and public engagement. This combination contributed to greater audience receptiveness and behavioural compliance, confirming earlier studies on the persuasive power of emotion in advertising communication (Heath, 2014; Du Plessis, 2018).

Ethical considerations played a significant role in shaping the effectiveness of advertising messages. Campaigns perceived as transparent and socially responsible were more likely to foster trust and reduce public uncertainty, whereas messages lacking ethical sensitivity risked generating skepticism and resistance. These results are consistent with existing literature highlighting the relationship between ethical communication practices and public trust during crises (Kotler & Lee, 2008; Coombs, 2015).

Comparative analysis across communication channels showed that digital advertising platforms enabled faster dissemination and broader reach of crisis-related knowledge compared to traditional media. Digital messages also allowed for higher levels of interaction and personalization, which strengthened cross-border knowledge transfer and facilitated adaptive social responses. This finding aligns with research on the role of digital media in accelerating information flow and enhancing social connectivity (Castells, 2010).

4. DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study confirm and extend existing research on the role of advertising in crisis communication by highlighting its function as a mechanism for knowledge transfer and social resilience. Consistent with prior studies, the results demonstrate that advertising messages combining clear informational content with emotional appeal are more effective in shaping public understanding and adaptive behaviour during crisis situations (Coombs, 2015; Heath, 2014). Compared to purely informational or purely emotional messages, integrated communication strategies generate higher levels of trust, engagement, and behavioural compliance.

The prominence of emotional appeal identified in the results aligns with earlier research emphasizing the persuasive power of emotions in advertising and social marketing. Previous studies indicate that emotions such as empathy, solidarity, and hope enhance message credibility and motivate pro-social behaviours, particularly in contexts characterized by uncertainty and perceived risk (Du Plessis, 2018; Cheng, Kotler, & Lee, 2011). In contrast, advertising campaigns that rely predominantly on fear-based appeals may attract short-term attention but risk undermining trust and long-term compliance, a pattern also discussed in crisis communication literature (Coombs, 2015).

Ethical considerations emerged as a key differentiating factor in the effectiveness of crisis-related advertising. The comparative analysis suggests that campaigns perceived as transparent and socially responsible contribute more significantly to social resilience than those prioritizing persuasive intensity over ethical clarity. This finding supports Kotler and Lee’s (2008) argument that socially responsible communication strengthens public trust and enhances the legitimacy of institutional messaging. Conversely, ethically questionable advertising practices may increase scepticism and weaken the intended process of knowledge transfer.

The comparative examination of communication channels reveals notable differences between traditional and digital advertising platforms. In line with Castells' (2010) theory of networked communication, digital advertising enables faster dissemination, greater interactivity, and broader cross-border reach of crisis-related knowledge. Compared to traditional media, digital platforms allow for real-time feedback and message adaptation, thereby enhancing audience engagement and supporting more dynamic forms of social resilience. Nevertheless, these advantages are accompanied by increased risks related to misinformation and message overload, which require careful strategic management (Chadwick, 2017).

Recent research highlights the growing role of social media platforms in shaping audience perceptions and engagement during crisis situations (Appel et al., 2020; Austin et al., 2021). Furthermore, contemporary studies emphasize the importance of trust, transparency, and responsible digital communication strategies in crisis-related advertising, particularly in online environments characterized by high information intensity. Research indicates that credibility and ethical clarity are essential for counteracting misinformation and sustaining audience engagement during crises (Verčič et al., 2021; Limaye et al., 2020).

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that advertising effectiveness in times of crisis is not determined by message reach alone, but by the strategic integration of informational accuracy, emotional resonance, ethical responsibility, and appropriate channel selection. When aligned with principles of ethical and socially responsible communication, advertising can function as a critical component of knowledge-based crisis management and contribute to informed, resilient societal responses.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study examined advertising as a tool for knowledge transfer and social resilience in times of crisis, highlighting its potential to extend beyond traditional commercial objectives. The findings demonstrate that advertising can play a significant role in communicating essential knowledge, reducing uncertainty, and supporting adaptive social behavior when crisis-related messages are designed in a clear, ethical, and emotionally balanced manner. These conclusions reinforce previous research emphasizing the importance of strategic communication in managing crisis situations (Coombs, 2015).

The results indicate that the integration of informational accuracy and emotional appeal is a key determinant of advertising effectiveness during crises. Advertising campaigns that combine factual guidance with messages of empathy and solidarity contribute more effectively to public trust and collective resilience than messages relying on a single communicative dimension. This supports existing studies in advertising and social marketing that underline the value of balanced message strategies in high-risk and uncertain contexts (Du Plessis, 2018; Kotler & Lee, 2008). Furthermore, the comparative analysis of communication channels suggests that digital advertising platforms offer significant advantages in terms of speed, reach, and cross-border knowledge transfer. However, these advantages also require a heightened commitment to ethical standards and message credibility in order to prevent misinformation and audience fatigue. As emphasized in the literature on networked communication, the strategic management of digital advertising is essential for sustaining long-term social resilience (Castells, 2010).

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations related to its qualitative and exploratory nature. Future research may expand the empirical basis by incorporating quantitative methods, audience surveys, or cross-cultural comparative studies. Such approaches would provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of different advertising strategies and further clarify the role of advertising in knowledge-based crisis management.

In conclusion, advertising represents a valuable yet underutilized resource in crisis communication and social resilience building. When aligned with principles of ethical responsibility, transparency, and knowledge-oriented communication, advertising can contribute meaningfully to informed decision-making and sustainable societal responses in times of crisis.

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